

Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre

Preliminary Report

August 24, 2003

Prepared by the International Survivors Action Committee
ISAC Corporation
www.isaccorp.com
isaccorp@yahoo.com

All documents are living documents.
A supplement to the report may be added at a later date.

© 2003 ISAC Corporation

If you wish to reprint this report in whole or in part you must obtain written permission from ISAC Corporation. In the case where a newspaper article is quoted, ISAC retains no restrictions of its reprint.

Legal:

Some of the information contained in this document originally appeared in newspapers and/or other publications. ISAC has made every effort to credit those sources in the case of direct quotes.

This report also contains some summarization as presented by ISAC. This summarization constitutes ISAC's conclusion and/or ISAC's opinion only. No decisions should be made solely on the basis of this report.

The information contained herein is correct to the best of our knowledge and belief at the present time. It is possible that during the time frame of our investigation, some of the information/policies may have in fact changed.

Table of contents

Section	Page
History.....	1
The Program – Based on its own Documents.....	2
The Board of Directors.....	5
Conclusion.....	8

History

Between June 1988 and February 1989, Straight, Inc. operated the Family Service Center in Edmonton.

During this time, F. Dean Vause was reportedly a guidance counselor at North Battlefield High School.

Miller Newton, former Clinical Director for Straight, Inc. was operating his own Straight-like program, Kids of Bergen County in New Jersey.

Due to the volume of Canadian teens recruited from Calgary into his New Jersey program, Newton opened Kids of the Canadian West--a support center to aid kids who had been through Kids of Bergen County.

Newton reportedly hoped to turn Kids of the Canadian West into another franchise treatment program.

In 1989, Vause accepted a position at Kids of Bergen County, under the supervision of Miller Newton.

Also in 1989, the CBS news program West 57th Street aired a damaging segment on Kids of Bergen County, alleging many cases of abuse and fraud. Newton then changed the name of the facility to Kids of North Jersey.

In 1990, Dean Vause was offered the position as director of Kids of the Canadian West.

In August 1990, Bergen County prosecutors entered Kids of North Jersey, investigating allegations of child abuse and false imprisonment.

At that point, there were 40 Canadian children in Kids of North Jersey, costing the Canadian Government \$25 per day per child for a daily total of \$1,000.

When Canadian authorities learned that they had not been paying for psychiatric or physician services – some \$250,000 later – those payments stopped.

In February 1992, Dr. Vause founded AARC, with the help of \$1 million raised by the Rotary Club.

Norman Haines, Communicator and Manager in Canadian Broadcasting for 25 years, served as principal consultant on the creation of the AARC.

AARC, like Straight, Inc., was reportedly opened in an industrial building located in a warehouse district.

Brian Neil, a former client of Kids, worked as a counselor at AARC, even though he reportedly had no training. Brian Neil hung himself in 1996.

The Program – Based on its Own Documents

- AARC claims a success rate of 80%. ISAC has been unable to verify the source of this success rate, but news reports indicate that the “success rate” reflects the percentage of clients who stay “sober” long enough to return to work or school.

Since clients are required to return to school or work on 3rd phase, ISAC wonders if this means that only 80% of clients reach that phase of the program.

It also appears peculiar to ISAC that this is the exact SAME success rate that Straight Incorporated and Kids of Bergen County claimed. When Miller Newton was recently asked in a court of law about scientific numbers that he reported, Miller was unable to come up with a source for those numbers.

- AARC accepts individuals aged 12 to 21 who are chemically dependant.

Our concern is that the treatment plan for this wide range of ages does not vary much, if at all, to the best of our knowledge.

ISAC also has concerns for individuals of such varying ages being placed together in “recovery homes.”

- AARC’s own literature states that their “long term treatment meets the needs of those who are chemically dependant.” However, AARC does not appear to have a detox program usually associated with chemically dependant individuals.

According to physicians interviewed by ISAC, attempting to treat individuals that are chemically dependant - that is individuals who are chemically dependant with psychological dependence - without proper detoxification or medical care, can be dangerous and even life threatening.

- AARC literature further states that “the program is often a last resort for young people who have been in jail, in front of the court, suicidal, violent and in psychiatric wards.”

However, there is no indication that AARC has a full time staff trained to deal with violent and/or suicidal individuals.

According to former clients, it is the peer staff who normally deals with such individuals.

Peer staff is comprised of individuals who have been in the program but do not usually posses any formal training and/or credentials.

In the opinion of ISAC, time spent receiving treatment should in no way be considered as experience providing treatment.

- AARC literature states that the participation of the family in therapy is “absolutely necessary for successful treatment.”

Straight, Inc. and Kids of Bergen County said the same thing.

In actuality, family participation is limited. The child is removed from the home for up to one year in some cases.

According to former clients of AARC, parents are instructed to not believe anything that children say against the program.

Conversations between parent and child are monitored on the lower levels which would seem to prevent the child from truly opening up to their parents.

- According to AARC literature, “Once a referral is made, the assessment process will determine the extent of the adolescent’s chemical dependency. Youth who meet the admission criteria will receive a full diagnostic assessment to determine an appropriate treatment plan.”

ISAC has been unable to find out more about the “assessment process” and “admission criteria” used at AARC.

ISAC has also been unable to locate a former client who saw his/her own “treatment plan.”

- The program literature uses the term “newcomer” and “oldcomer.”

This term was used specifically at Straight, Inc.

- The program is described in AARC literature as a “structured day treatment program.”

This description allows programs to be licensed as “outpatient” facilities and has aided similar programs in avoiding certain regulations.

They claimed that the children went home to foster homes and the treatment took place during the day. However, the mere existence of these foster homes indicated it was NOT day treatment but full residential treatment.

- “The client’s progress is evaluated by the Clinical Team in order to assess and update his/her individual treatment plan. The Client resides in the Recovery Home of, and under the supervision of, a peer who is a client at a more advanced level of treatment.”

This is the exact policy of both Kids of Bergen County and Straight, Inc.

This is also the exact policy that facilitated many of the abuses that took place in those programs.

In the opinion of ISAC, giving children control of other children almost guarantees abuse.

- “The primary treatment modality is group therapy complemented by ongoing one-on-one clinical sessions.”

ISAC has received reports that the “group therapy” is conducted under the supervision of peer staff, normally former clients with no credentials.

Statements from former clients make no mention of “one on one” clinical sessions.

- On level two the client is “working on family relationships” however, they are also an “oldcomer” responsible for a “newcomer.”

This policy is identical to both Straight, Inc. and Kids of Bergen County.

According to reports, some families involved with AARC are housing as many as 6 additional children each night.

ISAC is concerned that the “oldcomers” may not have adequate time to rebuild their family relationships while taking care of so many “newcomers.”

It should be noted that the descriptions of levels one through four are IDENTICAL to those at Straight, Inc.

- The “Parent Questionnaire”

ISAC staff members who are also parents participated in AARC’s “parent questionnaire.” Their answers were based on experiences with their own children. According to AARC’s questionnaire, these children have a significant drug problem; however none of the children involved has ever used drugs.

The Board of Directors

M. Ann McCaig (Chair)

Chancellor Emeritus, University of Calgary
Past-Chair, The Calgary Foundation
Co-chair of the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation's All for One, All for Kids \$50 million fundraising campaign.
Member of the Leadership Gifts Committee, Alberta Children’s Hospital Foundation
Trustee of Killiam Trusts
Director, Suncor Energy, Inc.

Dr. F. Dean Vause, PhD., (Executive Director)

Dr. Dean Vause previously worked as a guidance counselor at the secondary school level. (Source: <http://www.education.ualberta.ca/educ/research/tri-fac/enviro/sec4a-1.html>). Dr. Vause received his doctorate from Union University, a correspondence school that bills itself as “a university without walls.” This is the same school that awarded Miller Newton’s doctorate. Neither man had to take any test or attend classes to receive his degree. To the best of our knowledge, Union was not then, nor is it now an accredited university.

A supporter claims Dr. Vause spent twelve years on research to develop the AARC treatment model. This cannot be factual given that Vause was trained by Miller Newton who was trained at Straight, Inc. and the treatment modality in question has been around since 1976.

Gail Leicht at the College of Alberta Psychologists has confirmed that Vause is not listed in their registry and “cannot use the title of psychologist.”

Larry Delf (Vice-Chair)

Founding partner, Chairman, and Managing Partner of J.J. Barnicke Calgary Ltd., part of one of the most successful commercial real estate firms in Canada. This firm is also affiliated with ONCOR International, providing worldwide real estate services.

Delf has consistently been one of the top real estate brokers in Calgary and Canada, focusing on large clients such as Nortel, Canadian Pacific Railway, Bell Intrigna and Renaissance Energy.

Delf graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Marketing from the University of Calgary.

Paul Davis, P.Eng.

President and CEO, Sicom Solutions (develops e-business software)

Founder and COO, ROR Global Networks (appears to be an internet marketing technologies company)

University of British Columbia 1974, Electrical Engineering, was a Consulting Engineer for Sandwell Engineering in the fields of Power Engineering and Pulp and Paper.

Bruce Daze

Manager, Fund Development
Calgary Zoo

Richard Duke, P.Eng (Professional Engineer)

President, R.H. Duke & Associates

Member, Canadian Commission on Building and Fire Codes

Former Vice-President, Shell Canada Limited

Brian Pyra, C.A. (Certified Accountant)

Senior Tax Partner, Deloitte & Touche (financial services)

Dr. Alan Stanhope, Physician

No information available aside from an affiliation with the Bowmont Boxing Club.

Dennis Feuchuk

Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Prime West Energy
Prime West operates properties representing approximately 80% of the aggregate daily production of crude oil and natural gas in Canada.

Feuchuk was with Gulf Canada Resources Ltd. for 26 years, most recently as vice president and controller of Gulf Canada Resources and vice president and treasurer of Athabasca Oil Sands Trust.

Dr. Ralph Strother

Sports Medicine Physician
Vice-President, Trout Unlimited Canada (an organization aimed at conserving Canada's fresh water resources)
Member, Health, Seniors & Special Needs Advisory Committee, Calgary Foundation
Former Chair, Calgary Foundation

Terry Hopwood

Attorney
2nd Vice-Chair, Calgary Chamber of Commerce
Senior Vice-President and General Counsel, Suncor Energy Inc.

Patrick McDonnell

Partner, Business Consulting Services, IBM
E-Commerce Director, IBM in 2000

Joanne Taylor

Consultant

ISAC Note: There is a Joanne Taylor involved with the Calgary Centre for Non-Profit Management but we have not verified that this is the same person.

Peggy Stirrett
Consultant

ISAC Note: There is a Peggy Stirrett listed as a former committee member for the Institute for Risk Research, an organization that conducts research on risk management and works to establish a knowledge base to assist Canadian governments, public organizations and industry in risk management decisions and policies. We have not verified that this is the same person.

To the best of our knowledge, aside from Dr. Vause, none of these persons have experience in juvenile drug rehabilitation.

Conclusion

Upon reviewing the available information, it is ISAC's opinion that Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre bears disturbing similarities to two programs widely considered to be abusive – Straight, Inc. and Kids of Bergen County/North Jersey.

ISAC believes that these similarities warrant a much larger investigation into the practices of the facility in order to ensure that the rights of clients are being protected.

From Report, Canada's Independent News Magazine

March 5, 2001

THEY come to Calgary from all over the country. When they first come through the door, the adolescents, aged 12 to 21, are often angry and defiant. Sometimes they have to be shackled. The rules are harsh: no smoking, caffeine, makeup, jewellery, or fraternizing with the other teenagers. Hair products like hairspray and gel are banned, as are clothes with logos, and any footwear other than plain running shoes. This is what life is like in the most successful, long-term treatment program for chemically dependent teenagers in the country.

The Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre (AARC), founded in 1990 by psychologist Dean Vause, operates out of a 14,000-square-foot former factory in an industrial district; the regimen is harsh, but the centre has a gym, skating rink and fully equipped kitchen. Right now the facility is at its 36-client limit. It stands out from other such programs because of three reasons: its tough boot-camp attitude; its use of peer counsellors who have recovered from their own addictions; and its insistence that parents and siblings commit to the program and appear for counselling alongside the addicted teens.

AARC has established a nationwide reputation for taking on children other programs considered unsalvageable. A Coquitlam-based organization has been desperately lobbying the B.C. government for two years to implement the AARC model in Vancouver. Of AARC's yearly operating budget of \$1.5 million, about 15% is government-funded, half or so comes from fundraising, and 35% is paid by parents. Patients' families are asked to pay for treatment on an income-based sliding scale; they can be charged up to \$3,000 a month, but no one is turned away for inability to pay.

About 60% of AARC graduates stay sober without relapsing, estimates Dr. Vause. Approximately 40% relapse initially. Most of those permanently kick their addiction after further treatment, but about 10% do go back to drugs and alcohol. Other programs offer success rates of about 10%.

That is why Barb MacFarlane, of Calgary, chose AARC when she realized her now 17- and 20-year-old children were chronically addicted to drugs and alcohol. "I felt I failed somehow," she recalls. "When I finally took the kids there, I was desperate." After about a year of treatment, both children are doing well. "My daughter is finishing Grade 12. My son is working and hoping to go to college in September. They haven't relapsed," she says gratefully.

Florian is yet another AARC success story, one of dozens. One year ago, the 18-year-old was headed for a life in prison. He drank all day, every day. After getting drunk one night with friends, he threw a cocktail bomb into a house. Charged with attempted murder and arson, he was court-ordered to AARC. "I figured I'd bluff my way through this place, get

out and do the same stuff," he remembers. The day he arrived, his grandmother died. Since the program bans outside contact for the first months of treatment, he was not allowed to attend her funeral. "That was really harsh. I was really hurting. I had to ask to do everything, even to use the bathroom."

On September 29, 10 months and three weeks after first entering the door, Florian graduated from the program. "I was totally powerless here. It sucked big time. The peer counsellors got right in my face and told me how full of crap I was. But I was messed up. Now, I think of AARC as my birthplace. It's where I got a new beginning," says Florian. He is clean today, holding down a full-time job detailing vehicles. In about six months, he will ask to return to AARC, this time as a peer counsellor.

The peer counselors, graduates of AARC, range in age from 18 to 22. Having battled and kicked their own addictions, they mentor, nag and confront newcomers. "You can't con the con man," says Dr. Vause. "These kids don't come here because they see the light-- rather, they feel the heat. They're the biggest cons I've ever met. They are not honest; they're addicted and they're nasty. So we have a philosophy: bad manners only understands bad manners. We get in their face. We have to meet them on their level. They can't come in here and run the system. They're masters at bullying other clients, or manipulating to get the heat off."

"We don't let that happen here, and that's why AARC works," he says. "Treating addiction is not an easy, soft thing. It's labour-intensive, and it's all or nothing."

CANADIAN FORENSIC PSYCHIATRIC CENTRES

~ PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TO NCR-MD AND UNFIT POPULATIONS ~

Updated: August 19, 2003

ALBERTA

Alberta Hospital Edmonton

Peter Lougheed Centre

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Forensic Psychiatric Hospital

MANITOBA

Health Sciences Centre

Selkirk Mental Health Centre

NEW BRUNSWICK

Restigouche Hospital Centre

NEWFOUNDLAND

Waterford Hospital

NOVA SCOTIA

East Coast Forensic Psychiatric Hospital

ONTARIO

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

Lakehead Psychiatric Hospital

Mental Health Centre Penetanguishene

North Bay Psychiatric Hospital

Providence Continuing Care Centre

Royal Ottawa Health Care Group

Saint Joseph's Healthcare System

Regional Mental Health Care, St. Thomas

Whitby Mental Health Centre

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Hillsborough Psychiatric Hospital

QUEBEC

Centre Hospitalier du Centre-de-la-Mauricie

Centre Hospitalier Régional de Rimouski

Centre Hospitalier Robert-giffard

Centre Hospitalier Universitaire de Sherbrooke

Institut Philippe Pinel de Montreal

SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan Hospital North Battleford

Regional Psychiatric Centre

Guthrie Merit Award

We are no less proud of this year's seven outstanding Guthrie Merit Award winners (in alphabetical order):

- Anna Allison, 17, Ringgold, GA
- Jessica Frank, 17, Bellevue, NE
- Katherine Goossens, 18, Grand Forks, ND
- Megan Hamilton, 18, Troy, NC
- Barta Levente, 23, Eger, Hungary
- Anthony Moccia, 20, Hamden, CT
- Amy Speichert, 17, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Amy also was a twice-weekly volunteer in the evening for over a year at the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Center, where she counseled siblings whose brothers or sisters were alcohol or drug abusers. Says one of her supervisors, "Amy's strength, commitment and conviction helped an untold number of young children cope with and/or rise above their problems. Amy herself has endured hardships, particularly in regards to her health, that have contributed to her ability to help people extend themselves beyond their circumstance. Her ability to face her personal challenges makes her a natural role model for others."

17 year old high school student as a "counselor?"